



**For Immediate Release
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MaineDOT announces Maine Mall Area Road Work plan.

South Portland, ME -- MaineDOT Commissioner David A. Cole announced today a comprehensive set of roadway improvement projects for the Maine Mall area designed to improve traffic flow, enhance driver safety and convenience, and to support continued economic growth in South Portland and Maine. South Portland Mayor Jim Hughes and South Portland officials and business leaders emphasized the benefits that the projects would bring to their community.

The series of six projects include a mix of improvements being accomplished by the Maine Department of Transportation and the City of South Portland. Some of the projects are already under way, and one is already complete. The rest, including some of the most significant projects, are about to begin. The Maine Mall Area Road Work projects include:

- The creation of a new entrance ramp to Interstate-295 allowing right-hand turn access from Westbrook Street and Broadway at Exit 3, eliminating the need to cross oncoming traffic on Westbrook Street to enter I-295 northbound. (Under way now – complete Spring '07)
- The addition of a right-hand turning lane on the Maine Mall Road at the intersection of Running Hill Road and Gorham Road, allowing traffic to proceed more smoothly through that intersection. (Complete)
- The reconstruction of the Payne Road Bridge which carries traffic over the Maine Turnpike/Interstate-95 connector at Exit 45 (formerly Exit 7) to renew the lifespan of the bridge and to increase width to 3 lanes in each direction plus the addition of a sidewalk. (Fall '05 to Fall '08)

- The creation of Jetport Plaza Road adjacent to the Portland International Jetport, connecting Western Avenue and North Westbrook Street, providing new access to the area north of Western Avenue including improved emergency access to the Jetport. (Fall '05 to Spring '06)
- Redevelopment of the intersection of Western Avenue and Westbrook Street, including the construction of a left turn lane from Western Avenue onto North Westbrook Street as well as the construction of a dual left turn lane from North Westbrook Street onto Westbrook Street. The addition of these turning lanes will improve traffic flow and enhance safety. (Fall '05)
- The widening and resurfacing of Western Avenue from two to five-lanes, resulting in two-lanes in each direction with a center turning lane, wider shoulders, a bike lane and sidewalks for increased capacity, safety and convenience. (Spring '06 to Fall '07)

MaineDOT Commissioner David Cole stated, “We are working to enhance driver safety, convenience and the efficient flow of ever-increasing volumes of traffic in this part of South Portland. These efforts will bring important benefits needed today, and to prepare for the needs of tomorrow.” Mayor Hughes added, “These projects are an excellent example of successful joint-planning, cooperation and coordination between the Maine Department of Transportation and a Maine community to support and advance economic growth and quality of life for Maine people.” Jessica Roy, Vice-President of the South Portland Chamber of Commerce stated, “These improvements are welcomed by the South Portland business community, as our customers and employees will be able to travel more easily to and through the area.”

In all, the projects represent an investment in transportation infrastructure of more than \$26.68 million. Redevelopment of the intersection of Western Avenue and Westbrook Street is being funded by the developer of the Brick Hill residential project under an agreement with the city.

At the press conference and briefing, MaineDOT Commissioner Cole also outlined a public information program being developed by the Department to keep drivers informed, and to enable those who visit the Maine Mall area to receive updates on the roadwork. The plan for the “Maine Mall Area Road Work” public information program is expected to launch towards the end of November and includes:

- Press releases and updates to local media partners
- Public information notices in newspapers and on radio
- Updates through the 511 Travel Information system
- Information and updates on the MaineDOT web site
- Email alerts to those who register for them on the MaineDOT web site
- Point of purchase information at area businesses
- Distribution of information to area employers

“We are committed to keeping the traveling public informed about these projects and the progress we are making – we will work hard to keep disruption to a minimum, and we will give people the tools they need to receive updates or to easily access updated information.” said the Commissioner.

According to Jessica Roy of the South Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Maine Mall area in South Portland is one of the busiest areas in the state, with thousands of stores, restaurants, offices, manufacturing and distribution facilities and homes served by a network of heavily traveled roadways. “While public transportation is and will become even more important in the future, building and maintaining the network of roadways is critical to the large majority of people who travel by car to and from the area” Ms. Roy stated, “The traffic on our streets and roads is the life blood of our community, representing the movement of people and materials that make South Portland so vibrant.”